

"I'll show ya'" Carl says,
 throwing levers and pumping handles with both hands,
 moving his machine's table in and out
 and right and left and up and down
 as fast as he can,
 as he marks dial calibrations and strips of tape,
 creating path after path for a cutter to mill precise
 surfaces onto a 1,000 lb. steel shank.
 Soon the cutter is speeding across the shank,
 tossing out arcs of orange and blue-hot steel chips.
 Soon Carl crane-loads another shank onto the machine
 and says, "You do it,"
 and steps back
 as the new man tries
 to remember a few of the 32 steps
 of the operation.
 "WHAT'S THE MATTER, WEREN'T YOU WATCHING?"
 "CAN'T YOU DO ANYTHING?"
 "YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF NERVE WALKING IN HERE!"
 Carl is screaming,
 teeth bared, fists clenched, face crimson,
 glaring at the new man
 as if he were sure to be fired.

This is Carl's moment of glory,
 the reason why he has the foreman feed him the new men
 like chunks of raw meat.
 This makes Carl's 25 miserable dead-end years at
 his machine
 worth something.

CONFIDENCE

I walked in Monday morning
 and saw that Maintenance had put my machine back together
 a month after taking it apart for repairs.
 They had even covered the machine
 with a fresh coat of green paint.
 Of course I was skeptical,
 knowing that Maintenance often did more damage
 than repair —
 they were known for taking our machines apart
 with chisels and hammers and crowbars
 and replacing bad parts with other bad parts.
 "I sure hope this thing works right," I said to my foreman.
 "It ought to," he snapped. "They painted it!"